

1. Examine your own values and beliefs for evidences of bias and stereotyping.
2. Regard students as individuals first, with membership in a culture group as only one factor in understanding that individual.
3. Learn something about students' family and community relationships.
4. Consider nonstandard English and native languages as basic languages for students from culturally diverse populations to support gradual but necessary instruction in the majority language.
5. Allow students to work in cross-cultural teams and facilitate cooperation while noting qualities and talents that emerge.
6. Infuse the curriculum with regular emphasis on other cultures, rather than providing just one unit a year or a few isolated and stereotyped activities.

### What Would You Decide? *Your Culture Is Different*

Many classrooms have students from a variety of ethnic and cultural backgrounds. It is possible that you will feel disconnected from your students because you have a different ethnicity or different cultural background from your students.

1. What can you do so that you and your students feel comfortable with one another?
2. What can you do so that the different backgrounds do not contribute to misunderstandings and off-task behavior?

### Exceptionalities

*Exceptional students* include those who need special help and resources to reach their full potential. Exceptionalities include both disabilities and giftedness.

More than 10 percent of students in the United States are identified as having disabling conditions that justify placement in a special education program (Turnbull & Turnbull, 2007). This figure increases to 15 percent when gifted children are counted as special education students. Categories for special education services include learning disabilities, speech or language impairment, mental retardation, emotional or behavioral disabilities, other health impairment, multiple disabilities, hearing impairment, orthopedic impairment, visual impairment, deafness or blindness, traumatic brain injury, and autism spectrum disorder.

#### myeducationlab

Go to MyEducationLab, select the topic **Planning: Lessons and Units**, click "simulation," and select "Instructional Accommodations." Execute the simulation and complete the questions that accompany it.

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA) committed the United States to a policy of mainstreaming students who have handicapping conditions by placing them in the least restrictive environment in which they can function successfully while having their special needs met. The degree to which they are treated differently is to be minimized. The *least restrictive environment* means that students with special needs are placed in special settings only if necessary and only for as long as necessary; the regular classroom is the preferred least restrictive placement.

### Voices from the Classroom

#### Students with Learning Disabilities in the Regular Classroom

*Linda Innes, seventh-grade language arts teacher, Kansas City, Missouri*

I teach one class that is labeled a class-within-a-class, which means that students identified as being learning disabled (LD) are placed in the same class with regular middle school students. To help meet state standards required for LD students, the learning disability teacher co-teaches the class with me. To meet the students' needs in this class, I do several things to be very clear and specific when teaching or giving directions.

First, I give directions in various ways. I have two or three other students repeat the directions I just gave. Also, it is helpful to have the students write down the directions, especially for homework.

Second, I give instruction thoroughly and slowly. When the students are taking notes, I speak in a slower manner, write out the notes

word for word on the overhead projector, repeat what I have written and spoken several times, and monitor the room and the notes of the students to make sure that they are getting them copied down correctly. There are times when I or the LD teacher actually write the notes for some of the students or provide a photocopy due to the severe writing handicaps or slow processing skills.

Third, I place each LD student next to an academically strong student who can provide help whenever necessary. I have found that the stronger students benefit as well as the LD students. LD students get the personalized attention they require, and the regular student has the opportunity to explain the information and in the process learn it more thoroughly.

Teachers often make accommodations and modifications to their teaching to meet the learning needs of students with exceptionalities (Haager & Klingner, 2005). An *accommodation* is an adjustment in the curriculum, instruction, learning tasks, assessments, or materials to make learning more accessible to students. For example, a student might have an adapted test with fewer test items. The student may also have the same test but take it orally in a one-on-one situation with the teacher, or he or she might be given extra time to take a test. Different materials might be used to teach the same content, or additional practice or various instructional approaches may be used. In any case, accommodation is *not* a watering down or change in the content or a change in expected learner outcomes.

A *modification* is a change in the standard learning expectations so that they are realistic and individually appropriate. The curriculum or instruction is altered as needed. Modifications are used for students for whom all possible accommodations have been considered and who still need additional measures to help them progress. For example, students with skill deficits in reading or math may need modifications in assignments or the level of the content and reading materials, or they may need an alternative assignment or test.

### Students at Risk

Other environmental and personal influences may converge to place a student at risk. *Students at risk* are children and adolescents who are not able to acquire and/or use the skills necessary to develop their potential and become productive members of society. Conditions at home, support from the community, and personal and cultural background all affect student attitudes, behaviors, and propensity to profit from school experiences. Students potentially at risk include children who face adverse conditions beyond their control, those who do not speak English as a first language, talented but unchallenged students, those with special problems, and many others. At-risk students often have academic difficulties and thus may be low achievers.

Students at risk, especially those who eventually drop out, typically have some or all of the following characteristics (Ormrod, 2008): (a) a history of academic failure, (b) older age in comparison with classmates, (c) emotional and behavioral problems, (d) frequent interaction with low-achieving peers, (e) lack of psychological attachment to school, and (f) increasing disinvolvement with school.

Here are some general strategies to support students at risk (Ormrod, 2008):

- Identify students at risk as early as possible.
- Create a warm, supportive school and classroom atmosphere.
- Communicate high expectations for academic success.
- Provide extra academic support.
- Show students that they are the ones who have made success possible.
- Encourage and facilitate identification with school.

### Socioeconomic Status

*Socioeconomic status (SES)* is a measure of a family's relative position in a community, determined by a combination of parents' income, occupation, and level of education. There are many relationships between SES and school performance (Woolfolk-Hoy, 2007). SES is linked to intelligence, achievement test scores, grades, truancy, and dropout and suspension rates.

Students' school performance is correlated with their socioeconomic status: Higher-SES students tend to have high academic achievement, and lower-SES students tend to be at greater risk for dropping out of school (Books, 2004; Lee & Bowen, 2006; Ormrod, 2008). As students from lower-SES families move through the grade levels, they fall further and further behind their higher-SES peers. Students from higher-SES families, however, may face pressure from their parents to achieve at a high level, leading to anxiety and depression.

To better address the learning needs of students living in poverty, some educators seek to understand the characteristics of the students and their culture and then make appropriate decisions about curriculum and instruction. In *A Framework for Understanding Poverty*, Ruby Payne (2005, 2008) strongly advocates seeking this understanding. However, others have been critical of this approach as stereotyping students of poverty (e.g., Bomer, Dworin, May, & Semingson, 2008; Gorski, 2008).



Taking these factors into account, you should (a) capitalize on students' interests; (b) make course content meaningful to the students and discuss the practical value of the material; (c) make directions clear and specific; (d) arrange to have each student experience some success; (e) be sure that expectations for work are realistic; and (f) include a variety of instructional approaches, such as provisions for movement and group work.

### **CREATING AN INCLUSIVE, MULTICULTURAL CLASSROOM**

Understanding the sources of student diversity is not enough. You must use this information as the basis of many classroom decisions when creating a positive learning environment, selecting a responsive curriculum, determining instructional strategies, and providing assistance. A number of useful resources offer guidance about these issues, including *Culturally Proficient Instruction* (Robins, Lindsey, Lindsey, & Terrell, 2006), *Building Culturally Responsive Classrooms* (Gaitan, 2006), and *How to Teach Students Who Don't Look Like You* (Davis, 2006).

#### **Create a Supportive, Caring Environment**

How students feel about the classroom can make a big difference in how they participate. Your attitude toward the students and the curriculum can influence these student feelings. To create a supportive, caring environment, you should translate your attitude into the following actions:

1. *Celebrate diversity.* Student diversity exists in many ways, as reviewed earlier in this chapter. Students do not want to be criticized because they have some characteristic that is different from others. Through your actions, recognize that each student contributes to the rich variety of ideas and actions in the classroom. Show that you appreciate and value the diversity that is reflected in the students in the classroom. In turn, students will feel appreciated, rather than different, and this will make them feel more comfortable in the classroom.

2. *Have high expectations for students and believe that all students can succeed.* Teachers may sometimes consider certain sources of student diversity—cognitive ability, language, disabilities, socioeconomic status, for example—as having a negative effect on student performance. Thus, teachers may lower expectations and adjust the content and activities accordingly. However, this is a disservice to the students when they are not given the opportunity to address meaningful and challenging content and to develop their knowledge and skills. It is important to hold high expectations for all students and to believe that all students can succeed. Students appreciate the challenge and will find the classroom more stimulating and worthwhile as compared to a classroom with lowered expectations.

3. *Encourage all students.* Students who perform well academically often receive words of praise, reinforcement, and encouragement from teachers. There may be many students in a classroom who do not perform at the highest academic levels, but they would appreciate hearing encouraging statements as well. Encouraging words and guiding suggestions will help all students to feel that they are being supported in their efforts.

4. *Respond to all students enthusiastically.* When students see that their teacher is welcoming and enthusiastic about each student, they feel more comfortable in the classroom and more willing to participate fully. Warm greetings when students enter the classroom, conversations with individual students, and positive reactions when students contribute to classroom discussion are just a few ways that enthusiasm might be expressed. The main thing is that each student needs to feel valued and that each sees this through enthusiastic teacher responses.

5. *Show students that you care about them.* When students know that you care for them and that you are looking out for them, it makes all the difference in the world. Students then feel valued, regardless of their characteristics, and are more likely to actively participate in the classroom. Even when the teacher needs to deal with a student concerning a problem, the student recognizes that the teacher's actions are well intentioned.

### Offer a Responsive Curriculum

Students feel that they are valued when the curriculum is fair and relevant and when the content and curriculum materials reflect the diversity of learners in the classroom.

1. *Use a fair and relevant curriculum.* Teachers can make decisions to ensure that the curriculum is inclusive, relevant, and free of bias. Using the district-approved curriculum guide as a starting point, teachers can select appropriate instructional content to demonstrate that their students are valued as people and that they offer a challenging, culturally relevant curriculum. This content may involve integrating subject areas from diverse traditions, and the content may even arise out of students' own questions so that they can construct their own meaning.

2. *Consider differentiating curriculum materials.* Curriculum materials must also reflect the diversity of learners in the classroom. Books and other instructional materials should be free of bias, and they should provide the voices and perspectives of diverse people.

Once appropriate curriculum materials have been selected, teachers may allow students options in the use of these materials. Learning activity packets, task cards, and learning contracts are examples of *differentiated materials* that address individual differences by providing curriculum options. Learning centers, for example, include differentiated materials with several kinds and levels of goals and activities. Centers, packets, and cards can be made for a particular student's needs and then stored until another student has need of them. When prepared properly, the materials will accommodate different rates of learning and different cognitive styles.

**What Would You Decide? *Differentiated Materials***

Various types of materials can be used to meet the instructional objectives of a lesson and meet the learning interests of the students. Let's say that you are planning to teach a lesson on soil erosion.

1. How might you vary your instructional materials to accommodate students' individual differences?

2. How can you relate this topic to students' lives and make it interesting?
3. How might students' individual differences affect your planning decisions?

**Vary Instruction**

To meet the needs of diverse students, instruction cannot be one-dimensional. A variety of instructional approaches is needed to challenge all students and to meet their instructional needs. Several ways to vary your instruction are highlighted here.

1. *Challenge students' thinking and abilities.* Students have various learning styles, and they may learn best with their preferred learning style. However, should teachers always try to match student preferences and instructional methods? Probably not.

You should (a) start where the learner is (i.e., in concert with the pupil's level of development), (b) then begin to mismatch (i.e., use a different approach than what the student prefers) by shifting to a slightly more complex level of teaching to help the student to develop in many areas, and (c) have faith that students have an intrinsic drive to learn. These practices complement the recommendations of Lev Vygotsky, Lawrence Kohlberg, and others to nudge students beyond comfort zones of learning into just enough cognitive dissonance to facilitate growth.

2. *Group students for instruction.* Grouping makes differentiation of instruction more efficient and practical. When each group is challenged and stimulated appropriately, students are motivated to work harder. Differentiated materials can be used more easily. On the other hand, labeling can be stigmatizing if grouping is based on variables such as ability or achievement. Grouping too much and changing groups too infrequently can obstruct student integration and cooperation.

With the proper planning, structure, and supervision, grouping is a useful way to provide for individual differences. When using grouping arrangements, you should follow these guidelines:

- Make liberal use of activities that mix group members frequently.
- Adjust the pace and level of work for each group to maximize achievement. Avoid having expectations that are too low for low groups. Students tend to live up or down to teachers' expectations.
- Provide opportunities for gifted students to work with peers of their own level by arranging cross-age, between-school, or community-based experiences.



- Form groups with care, giving attention to culture and gender.
- Structure the experience and supervise the students' actions.
- Prepare students with the necessary skills for being effective group members, such as listening, helping, cooperating, and seeking assistance.

3. *Consider differentiated assignments.* *Alternative or differentiated assignments* can be provided by altering the length, difficulty, or time span of the assignment. Alternative assignments generally require alternative evaluation procedures.

Enrichment activities qualify as alternative assignments when directed toward the individual student's needs. There are three types of enrichment activities. First, relevant enrichment provides experiences that address the student's strengths, interests, or deficit areas. Second, cultural enrichment might be pleasurable and productive for the student even if not particularly relevant to his or her needs. An example would be an interdisciplinary study or a global-awareness topic. Third, irrelevant enrichment might provide extra activity in a content area without really addressing student needs.

4. *Consider individualized study.* *Individualized study* can be implemented through learning contracts or independent studies as a means to address individual needs. Such plans are most effective when developed by the student with your assistance. Individualized study facilitates mastery of both content and processes. Not only can the student master a subject, but he or she can also master goal setting, time management, use of resources, self-direction, and self-assessment of achievement. Independent study is ideal for accommodating student learning styles. Individual ability is nurtured, and students often learn more than the project required.

Independent study encourages creativity and develops problem-solving skills. It can be used in any school setting and all curricular areas. Most important, this method of learning approximates the way that the student should continue to learn when no longer a student in school.

This method requires varied, plentiful resources, and it may not provide enough social interaction. The student may spend too long on the study, and parents may complain that nothing is being accomplished.

When considering individualized study, you should do the following:

- Include the student in all phases of planning, studying, and evaluating.
- Encourage the student to ask higher-order questions (analysis, synthesis, evaluation) as study goals.
- Encourage the student to develop a product as an outcome of the study.
- Provide the student with an opportunity to share the product with an interested audience.
- Emphasize learner responsibility and accountability.

5. *Give opportunities for students to try different types of activities.* Although certain class activities and instructional strategies may seem well suited for a particular

student, it is important to involve the student in many different types of activities to challenge the student and the student's thinking and understanding.

6. *Use authentic and fair assessment strategies.* Some students demonstrate their learning better through certain types of assessment. Since there are many types of students in classrooms, a variety of methods for evaluating student learning should be used. Using a variety of approaches—such as written or oral tests, reports or projects, interviews, portfolios, writing samples, and observations—will circumvent bias. In addition, evaluation of student learning should be at several levels: recall, comprehension, application, analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

### **Provide Assistance When Needed**

Many classrooms include students who can benefit from special assistance in their learning. When creating an inclusive, multicultural classroom, these students must not be overlooked, because they may not advance in their learning without such assistance.

1. *Provide special individualized assistance to all students.* Teachers often provide individualized assistance to students who have difficulty learning. This assistance can make a big difference in helping students to overcome hurdles and can lead to better understanding. However, other students can benefit from this type of assistance as well. By providing assistance to all types of diverse learners, teachers express their interest in the student, provide support for student learning, and have the opportunity to challenge the student in new ways.

2. *Work with students with special needs.* As a first step, teachers need to know district policies concerning students with special needs and what their responsibilities are for referrals, screening, and the preparation of individualized educational plans (IEPs). Learning materials and activities can be prepared commensurate with the abilities of students with special needs. Positive expectations for student performance are a means to promote student learning.

## **DIFFERENTIATING INSTRUCTION**

How might teachers differentiate their instruction? As Figure 4.2 indicates, *differentiation* can take place when planning, grouping students, using instructional activities and materials, identifying assignments, and determining the assessments to use. The discussion of the vehicles of differentiation is organized in three areas: the curriculum, student characteristics, and instructional strategies.

### **Elements of the Curriculum That Can Be Differentiated**

The curriculum can be differentiated in three ways: (1) the content—the curriculum and the materials and approaches used for students to learn the content, (2) the process—the instructional activities or approaches used to help students to learn the curriculum,



**FIGURE 4.2 What a Differentiated Classroom Looks Like**

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**Planning should:**

- Be based on understanding student characteristics and needs.
- Be based on ongoing, diagnostic assessments to make instruction more responsive to students.
- Be based on an understanding of student readiness, interest, and learning profiles.
- Include students working with the teacher to establish whole-class and individual learning goals.

**Grouping of students should:**

- Include many types of groupings (whole class, small group, independent).
- Allow for flexible groups.

**Instructional activities should:**

- Permit multiple approaches to the content, activities, and products demonstrating student learning.
- Guide students in making interest-based learning choices.
- Permit many learning profile options.
- Use time flexibly based on student needs.
- Permit students to share multiple perspectives on ideas and events.
- Encourage students to be more self-reliant learners.
- Support students helping other students and the teacher to solve problems.
- Foster the students' responsibility for their own learning.

**Materials should:**

- Be many and varied, including instructional technology.

**Assignments should:**

- Vary in content, based on student need.
- Vary in difficulty, based on student readiness.
- Allow for choice based on student interests and strengths.
- Vary in time allotted.
- Contain directions that are clear and direct enough for students to understand.
- Provide a mechanism for students to get help when the teacher is busy with other students.

**Assessments should:**

- Be used to guide initial planning.
  - Be conducted throughout instruction of a unit to guide teacher decisions when making adjustments for the students.
  - Be conducted in multiple ways.
  - Define excellence in large measure as individual growth from a starting point.
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and (3) the products—the assessment vehicles through which students demonstrate what they have learned.

**Content.** *Content* includes the knowledge, skills, and attitudes related to the subject and the materials and mechanisms through which learning is accomplished. In practice, many districts have curriculum guides outlining objectives and content that

are expected for all students at a particular grade level or subject area. So there may not be much variation in the content to be taught, but there could be differentiation in the materials used in instruction (Gregory & Chapman, 2006).

Some ways that a teacher might differentiate access to the content include the following (Tomlinson, 2005a, 2005b; Tomlinson & Allan, 2000):

- Use texts or novels at more than one reading level.
- Present instruction through both whole-to-part and part-to-whole approaches.
- Use texts, computer programs, videos, and other media as a way of conveying key concepts to varied learners.
- Focus on teaching the concepts and principles, rather than on all the minute facts about the issues.
- Have advanced students work on special, in-depth projects, while the other students work on the general lessons.
- Use varied texts and resource materials.
- When reteaching is necessary, alter the content and delivery based on student readiness, interests, or learning profile.
- Provide various types of support for learning, such as using study buddies, note-taking organizers, and highlighted printed materials.

**Process.** *Process* includes the instructional activities or approaches used to help students to learn the curriculum. Process is how the student comes to make sense of and understand the key facts, concepts, generalizations, and skills of the subject. An effective activity involves students using an essential skill to understand an essential idea, and the activity is clearly focused on the learning goal.

Some ways that a teacher might differentiate process or activities include the following (Tomlinson, 2005b; Wormeli, 2007):

- Provide options at differing levels of difficulty or options based on differing student interests.
- Give students choices about how they express what they learn in a project (e.g., create a newspaper article report, display key issues in some type of graphic organizer).
- Differ the amounts of teacher and student support for a task.

**Products.** *Products* are the vehicles through which students demonstrate what they have learned. Products can also be differentiated, and they may include actual physical products (e.g., portfolios, reports, diagrams, or paper-and-pencil tests) that students prepare, as well as student performances designed to demonstrate a particular skill. Performance-based assessment, including student products and performances, is discussed more thoroughly in Chapter 11. A good product causes students to rethink what they have learned, apply what they can do, extend their understanding and skill, and become involved in both critical and creative thinking.

### Voices from the Classroom

#### Let Your Students Select the Test Format

*Steffanie Ogg, high school teacher, St. Paul, Minnesota*

One way that I accommodate various student learning styles is to offer students a choice of test formats. I usually offer my tests in three formats: multiple choice, short essay (or fill-in-the-blank), and matching questions. The student can then select the test format that he or she prefers. The test questions are similar, but the way that the student needs to respond to the questions addresses various ways that students learn and retain information.

I knew that this was a good idea when I heard the students say, "I want to do the matching test;

that is a breeze." But another student will say the same thing about one of the other test formats.

At first, creating different versions of a test may be more work for the teacher, but it is worth it when you have greater student success. In fact, some textbook companies provide computer programs with premade tests in different formats.

I also provide students with a little orientation about how to take different types of tests. This includes teaching a simple testing strategy and giving a few practice problems. The results have been great.

Examples of ways to differentiate products include the following:

- Allow students to help design products around essential learning goals.
- Provide product assignments of varying degrees of difficulty to match student readiness.
- Use a wide variety of assessments.
- Work with students to develop rubrics that allow for demonstration of both whole-class and individual goals.
- Provide or encourage the use of varied types of resources in preparing products.

Particular attention often needs to be given to *struggling learners* so they have challenging products to create and the support systems that lead to success. Here are some suggestions (Tomlinson, 2005a):

- Be sure product assignments for learners require them to apply and extend essential understandings and skills for the unit or other product span.
- Use product formats that allow students to express themselves in ways other than written language alone.
- Give product assignments in smaller increments, allowing students to complete one portion of a product before introducing another.
- Think about putting directions on audio- or videotape so students can revisit explanations as needed.
- Prepare or help students to prepare time lines for product work so that tasks seem manageable and comfortably structured.